

## **Emergency Support Function #15 Media Relations and Community Outreach**

<b>Primary District Agency:</b>	Office of Communications, Executive Office of the Mayor
<b>Support District Agencies:</b>	DC Public Schools Department of Health Department of Human Services Department of Mental Health Department of Parks and Recreation Department of Public Works District Department of Transportation Emergency Management Agency Executive Office of the Mayor Fire and Emergency Medical Services Metropolitan Police Department Office of Cable Television and Telecommunications Office of the Attorney General Office of the Chief Technology Officer Office of the Chief of Staff, Executive Office of the Mayor Office of Community Affairs, Executive Office of the Mayor Office on Asian and Pacific Islander Affairs Office on Latino Affairs Serve DC
<b>Primary Federal Agency:</b>	Department of Homeland Security/Emergency Preparedness and Response/Federal Emergency Management Agency

### ***I. Introduction***

#### **A. Purpose**

ESF #15—Media Relations and Community Outreach provides guidance on the media relations and community outreach function to expedite the District of Columbia's (DC) ability to help citizens recover from the effects of a public emergency. This function supports DC agencies, as needed, after a public emergency in gathering and disseminating information. ESF #15 serves as a direct link to media outlets, community leaders, and DC residents and works in

close coordination with other program elements to develop and deliver critical information during and immediately following a public emergency.

In the event of a public emergency involving the activation of federal response plans (e.g., the National Response Plan (NRP), the National Contingency Plan, etc.), ESF #15 will coordinate with the federal community and other District response agencies to support information collection and dissemination to the public, the media, and other interested parties. Similarly, in the event of a multi-jurisdictional event involving both the District and surrounding areas, ESF #15 will coordinate and collaborate with media, community, and public information personnel from these jurisdictions to support communities and provide the media and public with needed and useful information.

## **B. Scope**

This annex discusses the policies, responsibilities, and concept of operations for the ESF #15 elements in a potential, imminent, or declared disaster. The mission of ESF #15 is to contribute to the well being of the community following a public emergency by disseminating accurate, consistent, timely, and easy-to-understand information. Specific objectives are to:

- Assess and convey the nature of the emergency to the public quickly in a form that is accessible, factually accurate, and easily understood.
- Provide critical information to the media and general public concerning the District's response to the emergency.
- Provide critical information concerning the public emergency support assistance, including shelter information, recovery assistance, and District and federal assistance availability.
- Provide accurate authoritative information to minimize rumors and false information.

## **II. Policies**

- A. This ESF is responsible for assessing and documenting the social, political, and cultural aspects of a disaster area that might affect the public emergency response and recovery effort.
- B. This ESF is designed to ensure that affected citizens are aware of available District and/or federal disaster assistance programs and how to access them.
- C. All information being disseminated to the public must follow the guidelines established by the Mayor's Office of Communications.
- D. This ESF will establish and staff the Joint Information Center (JIC), as needed.

### ***III. Situation***

#### **A. Disaster Condition**

1. After a public emergency, normal means of communications in the affected area may be destroyed or severely disrupted; therefore, only limited and incomplete information may be expected from the area until communications can be restored.
2. The period immediately following a public emergency is critical in setting up the large and complex mechanism that will be needed to respond to the emergency public information and news requirements generated.
3. After a public emergency, District and federal assistance may be available and a need will exist to inform the public on the types of assistance being offered.

#### **B. Planning Assumptions**

1. ESF #15 personnel will deploy simultaneously with other initial disaster response elements as warranted by the situation.
2. Up-to-date and pre-programmed resource databases will be available to provide established contacts, relationships, and rosters of District government officials, media, and appropriate community groups and organizations.
3. ESF #15 will coordinate with all elements of the District's government to ensure that information disseminated in the field is accurate, timely, and consistent.

### ***IV. Concept of Operations***

#### **A. General**

1. Preparation by Emergency Management Agency (EMA) staff for an anticipated or actual event will include coordinating with the District response agencies, collecting relevant information on the situation, alerting required staff, and deploying ESF #15 personnel to the Emergency Operations Center (EOC), the Executive Office of the Mayor (EOM), and any mobile command center (DC10) in or near the affected area.
2. In coordination with other staff elements, an initial media relations and community outreach plan, with disaster-specific guidance and objectives, will be prepared jointly by the Director of Communications and the Director of the Office of Community Outreach and representatives of the

appropriate District agencies at the beginning of each public emergency operation.

3. This ESF will be performed jointly by personnel from the various involved District organizations and other involved organizations (e.g., the American Red Cross (ARC), other neighboring states, and the federal government), as appropriate, working to achieve the objectives specified in the Media Relations and Community Outreach Plan.
4. As needed, field personnel will be organized and dispersed throughout the affected area. They will include trained personnel who know the community. The cultural, racial, and ethnic makeup of the affected population (including languages spoken) will be taken into consideration to the extent possible when making field team assignments.
5. The Community Outreach element coordinates closely with the affected District response agencies to identify community leaders (e.g., grassroots, political, religious, educational, business, labor, ethnic) and neighborhood advocacy groups that will assist in rapidly disseminating information, identifying unmet needs, establishing ongoing dialogue and information exchange, and facilitating collaborative multi-organizational and multi-level planning and mutual support for public emergency recovery (e.g., federal and/or District, as appropriate based on the conditions and scenario of the public emergency).

## **B. Organization**

1. The Chief of Staff has designated the Director of Communications and the Director of the Office of Community Outreach as the lead ESF #15 coordinators to support public and community information dissemination at the earliest possible moment upon District awareness that a public emergency is imminent or has occurred.
2. The Community Outreach element is responsible for organizing and managing the field component, which interfaces with response entities, community organizations, and emergency victims. The field component may be divided into geographic areas and sectors, depending on the size and nature of the public emergency. Area managers are assigned to disasters that affect a large geographic area and/or have a large number of sector teams. Area managers assist in the supervision of sector teams to maintain an appropriate management span of control and enhance day-to-day communications. Each Community Outreach sector will have an assigned sector manager who reports to the Community Outreach Coordinator or designee located at the EOC.

**C. Notification**

In response to an anticipated or actual event, ESF #15 critical staff will be notified, activated, and deployed. Staff from other District agencies and departments may be used to augment operations in public emergency, as needed.

**D. Response Actions****1. Initial Actions of Media Personnel**

- a. Direction of and decision-making about media relations and public information operations at the Joint Information Center (JIC) will be the responsibility of the Mayor's Director of Communications.
- b. An individual at the JIC will be designated to take the lead on all housekeeping activities (maintenance, equipment supplies).
- c. A coordination desk will be established in the public information work area, staffed by public information officers. This will serve as a central point from which all information (announcements, status reports, responses to queries, plans for briefings, etc.) will be disseminated. There will also be a work area for public information within the Emergency Operations Center.
- d. An initial news release will be issued no later than one hour from the time a readiness level-3 condition has been declared.

**2. Initial Actions of Outreach Personnel**

- a. Direction of and decision-making about community outreach activities will be the responsibility of the Department, Chief of Staff, or his or her designee.
- b. Establish contact via fax/phone with Ward Based Emergency Command Centers and key community leaders (Faith, Asian, and Latino).
- c. Establish contact via fax/phone with DC Councilmembers; Members of Congress, including Members from the region, Congressional leadership and members of the House and Senate District Committees, and the Governors of Virginia and Maryland.
- d. Receive status reports from Ward Command Center personnel concerning emergencies and casualties in the neighborhoods.

- e. Translate media advisories and press releases into foreign language for dissemination.
- f. Determine need to engage volunteer corps, and in which specific areas.

### 3. Continuing Actions of Media Personnel

- a. In an emergency, oral communications (e.g., briefings and responses to queries) become the primary method of informing the news media.
- b. News briefings will be conducted on a regular basis or as events dictate. All official news briefings shall be conducted by senior officials, preferably by the Mayor and shall be held at the EOC whenever possible. Technical briefers and well-versed public information officers will be available to handle queries by phone and in person between news briefings.
- c. Organizations wishing to speak at news briefings will coordinate with the JIC.
- d. Mass distribution channels will be used by JIC staff for distribution of information (fax, email, broadcast) that is available in writing.
- e. Significant rumors that surface in calls from the public or news media should be reported to the JIC, particularly if a pattern is observed which indicates that an erroneous rumor is circulating. Accurate information on the subject will then be provided by the coordination desk to all organizations and to the news media at the JIC.
- f. Emergency advisories utilizing Channel 16 or Channel 13 may be activated to provide additional emergency information as it becomes available. The Office of Cable Television and Telecommunications will coordinate with the appropriate local radio stations to broadcast emergency advisories.
- g. The Federal Emergency Alert System can be activated if needed when directed by the mayor, or his or her designee.
- h. The District's Web site, as a critical source of information for the news media and the public, will be updated every 30 minutes or as needed.

- i. Additional agency public information officers will be identified and may be located at non-JIC response sites.
4. Continuing Actions of Outreach Personnel
  - a. Maintain a two-way exchange of information between JIC Personnel and Ward Command Center Personnel.
  - b. Provide updated information (via fax and phone) to key community and civic leaders, JIC media personnel, DC Councilmembers, Members of Congress, Governors of Maryland and Virginia and necessary ESF's.
  - c. Communicate needs of communities with service providing agency contacts such as: Department of Health (medical), Department of Human Services (food), Department of Parks and Recreation (shelter).
  - d. As necessary, engage volunteer corps. Direct to various staging centers throughout the city in accord with needs assessed by Ward Command Center Personnel.

## ***V. Responsibilities***

### **A. Primary District Agency**

**Office of Communications, Executive Office of the Mayor (EOM)**—The Office of Communications, EOM will ensure that the ESF #15 function promotes equal access to disaster assistance consistent with appropriate District and federal laws, regulations, mandates, and policies (e.g., Title VI of the Civil Rights Act, American with Disabilities Act).

Under ESF #15, the Office of Communications, EOM will establish and adhere to standardized procedures that provide for an effective level of community relations services to disaster victims, the public, the media, and other interested and involved organizations. The Office of Communications, EOM with support from representatives from other District offices and organizations, volunteer organizations, and other sources, will prepare briefings, communication plans, press releases, fact sheets, newsletters, pamphlets, and other communications and outreach materials. These actions will take place through the Joint Information Center (JIC). Furthermore, other assistance related to outreach functions will be provided (e.g., creating and updating District Web sites, conducting public meetings, providing translators to visitors/tourists impacted by the disaster), as needed.

In the event of a public emergency involving a District and/or federal government response, the Media Relations Coordinator will collaborate with Federal Public Information Officers from the Department of Homeland Security/Emergency Preparedness and Response/Federal Emergency Management Agency (DHS/EPR/FEMA) and other organizations to ensure timely, reliable, consistent, and accurate information is made available to the public, affected communities, and other relevant parties. This collaboration will take place through the JIC, located at the Reeves Center, which will be activated by the Chief of Staff. Responsibilities of the JIC include, but are not limited to:

- Monitoring news reports and media outlets to track information concerning the event, ensuring accuracy of reporting, and taking action to correct misinformation and incorrect information concerning the disaster response, recovery, and mitigation operations that appear in the news media;
- Maintaining contact with and gathering information from federal, District, and voluntary organizations taking part in disaster response operations;
- Handling news conferences and press operations for disaster area tours by government officials and the press;
- Coordinating with the Logistics Section to provide basic facilities, such as communications, office space, and supplies, to help the news media disseminate information to the public; and
- Providing staff and other resources for a JIC operation.

## **B. Support District Agencies**

Each District agency has specific responsibilities to provide timely, effective, accurate information to the citizens and visitors of the District. In the event of a public emergency, each District entity shall coordinate the distribution of information to ESF #15 for dissemination to the public, the media, and other involved organizations through the Office of Communications to ensure accurate, consistent, timely, and reliable information.

The following District agencies will provide staff and resources to support the collection of information and the dissemination of messages and information to disaster victims and the general public to promote public health and safety:

1. DC Public Schools
2. Department of Health
3. Department of Human Services
4. Department of Mental Health
5. Department of Public Works
6. Department of Parks and Recreation
7. District Department of Transportation
8. Emergency Management Agency
9. Executive Office of the Mayor
10. Fire and Emergency Medical Services
11. Metropolitan Police Department



12. Office of Cable Television and Telecommunications
13. Office of Community Outreach, Executive Office of the Mayor
14. Office of the Attorney General
15. Office of the Chief of Staff, Executive Office of the Mayor
16. Office of the Chief Technology Officer
17. Office on Asian and Pacific Islander Affairs
18. Office on Latino Affairs
19. Serve DC

**C. Primary Federal Agency**

**Department of Homeland Security/Emergency Preparedness and Response/Federal Emergency Management Agency (DHS/EPR/FEMA)—**

The Department of Homeland Security is the coordinator for National Response Plan (NRP) ESF #15 and will provide direct, technical, and other support to the District through the District ESF #15 Liaison Officer, in conjunction with ESF #5—Information and Planning.

Upon the Presidential Declaration of an emergency or major disaster, under the authority of the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief Act as Amended, April 1999, the NRP will be implemented by DHS/EPR/FEMA. Initially, federal agencies will operate out of the FEMA Regional Response Coordination Center (RRCC). Later, when the Joint Field Office (JFO) is established near the disaster area, the agency ESF representatives, who comprise the Emergency Response Team, will be in the JFO. Wherever FEMA chooses to establish its operation, there will be a JIC established to coordinate the joint federal-District message to the public.

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